The Builder.

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IN pursuance of our intention to follow the consideration of the Metropolitan Building Act by that of the proposed general Act relative to the Health of Towns throughout the three kingdoms, or England and Wales at least, we this week enter a little into that subject.

In the propounding of any such extensive measure, fears are apt to be generated in the minds of many persons, of the enactment of unnecessary interferences leading to great vexation, trouble, delay, expense, and private inconvenience: and certainly statutes purporting to be merely sanatory are too apt to be afflicted by some one at least of such drawbacks upon their usefulness. Very great caution, therefore, ought to be used in the framing of any legislative measure of the kind, that when enacted, a fair chance may be provided of the long existence of such measure; and so do away with one of the curses of modern legislation, constant wavering—hasty and perpetual alteration—uncertainty, by the leaving of cramp-corners—and which faults are sure to produce a violent desire for change before better schemes are provided; the end of which is, that English law, which each English subject is supposed, and that penally, to understand, vexes the most astute jurisconsults; and after a man of incessant industry and shrewdness has passed the greater part of his life in becoming learned upon one branch of English law, he finds suddenly all his lore, all his industry, all the cramping down of his mind to the contracted subtleties of technical language, profit nothing, and that his occupation has gone; the traps which he had mastered are withdrawn; and the legal pit-falls he had learned to avoid no longer require the pilotage of the black-letter-ind of the wriukle-browed civilian.

Many persons will think no measure of the kind is indeed necessary; perhaps with most small English towns which are clean and healthy, no such statutory interference would be of any value, were not some other measures of good account to be united with such general enactment.

But turning to the statistics of any great town, such for instance as Liverpool, few persons would for a moment hesitate in admitting such a measure to be most imperatively called for by the exigencies of the case.

The following quotations are from a pamphlet "On the Physical Causes of the high rate of Mortality in Liverpool, read before the Literary and Philosophical Society of Liverpool, by W. H. Duncan, M.D.," and some time since published by that society.

"Table of the relative Mortality of Seven of the principal Towns, calculated on the average of 1838-39-40.

Towns.	Population in 1841.	Deaths.
Metropolis	1,870,727	1 in 37·30
Birmingham	138,147	,, 28·79
Leeds	186,867	,, 26·73
Sheffield	83,993	,, 27·29
Bristol	64,998	,, 27·28
Manchester (Union)	192,408	,, 30·64
Liverpool (Parish)	253,034	,, 28·75

"This table makes Liverpool the most unhealthy town of the series.

"Table shewing the average Age of Deaths.

	Average Age at Death.
Metropolis, i. e., Kensington, Strand, Whitechapel, and Bethnal Unions	36½ years.
Leeds	21 ,,
Manchester	20 ,,
Bolton	19 ,,
Liverpool	17 ,,

The average duration of life in London, as taken from these examples, is therefore 56 per cent. more than in Liverpool.

"Table of average Age of Death in Professions and Trades.

Towns.	Average Age at Death.			
	Gentry and professional men.	Tradesmen.	Labourers, &c.	General average.
Rendal	45 years.	30 years.	34 years.	36 years.
Bath	55 ,,	37 ,,	33 ,,	31 ,,
Four Metropolitan Unions	44 ,,	26 ,,	22 ,,	26 ,,
Leeds	44 ,,	27 ,,	19 ,,	21 ,,
Bolton	34 ,,	23 ,,	10 ,,	19 ,,
Manchester	38 ,,	20 ,,	17 ,,	19* ,,
Liverpool	35 ,,	22 ,,	15 ,,	17 ,,

"The population of the parish of Liverpool, by the census of 1841, amounted to 223,054; of whom about 160,000 may be estimated to belong to the working classes; and of these, it is well known that a large proportion inhabit courts and cellars, and the remainder live in houses or rooms to the front of the street. As some members present may not be acquainted with the character and construction of the courts in which so many of their townsmen reside, I may state shortly that they consist usually of two rows of houses placed opposite to each other, with an intervening space of from 9 to 15 feet, and having two to six or eight houses in each row. The court communicates with the street by a passage or archway about 3 feet wide—in the older courts built up overhead; and the further end being also in many instances closed by a high wall, or by the back or side of an adjoining building; the court forms, in fact, a *cul de sac* with a narrow opening. Such an arrangement almost bids defiance to the entrance of air, and renders its free circulation through a court a matter of impossibility. * * The houses themselves are three stories high, contain three rooms of about 10 or 11 feet square, and being built back to back with the houses of adjoining courts, there is of course no thorough draught. An enumeration of the court and cellar population of the borough was made two years ago, under the authority of the Town Council, when it appeared that there were in the parish of Liverpool, 1,982 courts containing 10,692 houses, and 55,534 inhabitants. That is to say, more than one-fourth of the whole parochial population, or more than one-third of the working classes, were resident in courts. With regard to the character of these courts, it appears from the report of the Corporation surveyors, that 639, or nearly one-third, were closed at both ends; 875, or less than one-half, were open at one end; and only 478, or less than one-fourth, open at both ends.

"The cellars are 10 or 12 feet square; generally flagged, but frequently having only the bare earth for a floor, and sometimes less than 6 feet high. There is frequently no window, so that the light and air can gain access to the cellar only by the door, the top of which is often not higher than the level of the street. In such cellars ventilation is out of the question. They are of course dark; and from the defective drainage they are also very generally damp. There is sometimes a back cellar used as a sleeping apartment having no direct communication with the external atmosphere, and deriving its scanty supply of light and air solely from the front apartment.

"The enumeration already alluded to shewed that there were in the twelve wards forming the parish of Liverpool, 6,294 inhabited cellars, containing 20,168 inhabitants, exclusive of the inhabited cellars in courts (of which there were 621, containing probably 2,000 inhabitants.) * * Of the entire number of cellars, 1,617 have the back apartment I have mentioned, while of 5,297, whose measurements are given, 1,771, or one-third, are 5 to 6 feet deep; 2,324 are from 4 to 5 feet, and 1,202, from 3 to 4 feet below the level of the street; 5,273, or more than five-sixths, have no windows to the front; and 2,429, or about 44 per cent., are reported as being either damp or wet.

"The streets inhabited chiefly by the working classes are on an average perhaps about 8 yards in width; they seldom exceed 10, and sometimes are not more 5 yards across. Each house is usually occupied by two or more families, exclusive of the cellar, and most of the densely peopled lodging-houses are situated in the streets. As a general rule, the houses have no thorough draught, from being frequently built up against the houses in the courts behind.

Upon this subject a writer in the *Polytechnic Magazine* of January last declares—

"These disclosures have astounded us. If they had been brought from amongst the savage tribes of America, we should not have given them credit, because we have the evidence of witnesses to prove that the uncivilized man has often a very quick perception of what is unhealthy, and avoids it; but to think that the surveyors of the Corporation of Liverpool, the second town in the empire, should in the 19th century have had it in their power to lay before the public a catalogue of such hideous elements of misery, is indeed startling;—there must be an end put to the "*laissez faire*" system, and that right soon.

"The average density of the population of England and Wales is 273 inhabitants to the square mile, while that of the twenty-one principal towns is 5,045 inhabitants to the square mile. The following table exhibits the comparative density both over the whole area, and the area actually built upon of our five most populous towns.

Towns.	Inhabitants to the square mile.	
	Of the total area.	Of the builded area.
Leeds	20,972	87,250
Metropolis	27,423	36,000
Birmingham	31,969	40,000
Manchester (Union)	83,778	120,000
Liverpool (parish)	189,000	130,234

"We learn from this table that when compared with London, the population of Liverpool is nearly four times denser, if we take the whole area built and unbuilt into account, and that the actual built area of Liverpool has a population two and a half times more crowded than the corresponding area of the metropolis. This is no doubt a strange fact, but when we come to examine the comparative density of the population in different districts of Liverpool, we shall find cause for more surprise.

"Dr. Duncan states that there is a district containing about 12,000 inhabitants crowded together upon a surface of 105,000 square yards, which gives a ratio of 460,000 inhabitants to the square mile. This occurs in Exchange Ward, in the immediate vicinity of the Town Hall, the Exchange, and the splendid offices of the Liverpool merchants; and he further states that that portion of the district bounded by Addison-street and Great Crosshall-street contained, in 1841, 211 houses, and 7,938 inhabitants on an area of about 49,000 square yards, giving a ratio of 857,983 inhabitants to the square mile!—a proportion, perhaps, unparalleled in the world for its density. In order to enable our readers to form an estimate of what the condition of the poor in this district must be, we shall compare it with London. The present population of the metropolis is about 1,800,000, and every square mile of building contains 50,000 people. Those who are accustomed to walk our streets see no evidence of under-population, but the contrary. Now, by the census of 1841, the population of Great Britain and Ireland amounted to above 26 millions and a half, and if we could suppose 25 millions of these crowded into the present houses of London, we should

* Mr. Chadwick gives 20 as the average for Manchester, as in the preceding Table, but the data only give 18.